

IRISH INSIDER

NOTRE DAME 20, MICHIGAN STATE 3 | **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2012** | NDSMCOBSERVER.COM

Coming together

Te'o, Notre Dame stifles Michigan State, begin 3-0 for first time since 2002

By **MATTHEW DeFRANKS**
Associate Sports Editor

It was a simple second-and-10 in the third quarter.

Michigan State junior running back Le'Veon Bell took a handoff and cut to the right before Irish senior linebacker Manti Te'o brought him down in the back-field for a one-yard loss. Te'o rose and pointed to the sky. It was third-and-11.

Te'o rebounded from a week in which he lost both his grandmother and his girlfriend to record 12 tackles and lead the No. 20 Irish to a 20-3 win over No. 10 Michigan State.

"That was for them," Te'o said. "That was for my girl and my grandma and all my loved ones that have passed on. I know they're all watching. It was a happy moment."

The victory marks the first time since 2005 the Irish (3-0) topped a top-10 opponent since 2005, snapping a nine-game losing streak in the category. Notre Dame is also 3-0 for the first time since 2002, when the Irish started 8-0.

In the win over the Spartans (2-1), Notre Dame beat a top-10 team on the road at night for the first time since 1983. The Irish beat Michigan State in back-to-back years for the first time in nearly two decades.

"It's a big leap. It's a signature win. There's no question that when you go on the road against the No. 10-ranked team in the country and you beat them, it's definitely going to build some confidence in that locker room," Irish coach Brian Kelly said. "They believe if they do the little things the right way ... this win will help in that development."

Notre Dame stifled Bell and the Michigan State running game, allowing just 50 rushing yards on 25 carries. Bell settled for 77 yards on 19 attempts.

"Obviously we felt like if we can get him under control and force [Michigan State] to throw the football, we would much rather have that scenario than him grinding the football at us," Kelly said. "I think once they started to throw the football more, that was exactly where we're hoping the game would kind of shift towards, and it did."

When the Spartans did throw the ball, the Irish harassed junior quarterback Andrew Maxwell. Notre Dame sacked Maxwell four times as he finished the game 23-for-45 for 187 yards.



KEVIN SONG | The Observer

Sophomore quarterback Everett Golson evades the Michigan State defense while scoring on a six-yard touchdown run in the second quarter of Notre Dame's 20-3 win over the Spartans on Saturday.

"We didn't run the football, we didn't protect the quarterback very well and we had some drops. We need to have more explosive plays on offense," Spartans coach Mark Dantonio said.

Michigan State started 12 drives inside its own 30-yard line and did not enter the red zone, rolling up just 237 yards of total offense. The Spartans' three points were the fewest they have scored at home since 1991, and the loss snapped their 15-game home winning streak.

Michigan State's only points came on a 50-yard field goal by senior kicker Dan Conroy.

"I think we had a pretty good performance but at this point in time, I think we can get better. That's the good part about it," junior defensive tackle Louis Nix said. "We did a pretty good job with this team. They're a great team, great running back, great offensive line."

"A shutout would be fantastic so you can get even better."

Junior linebacker Prince Shembo had nine tackles, including two for loss and a sack, while sophomore defensive end Stephon Tuitt compiled four tackles, a sack and a forced fumble. Tuitt now has five sacks in three games.

The Irish offense struggled early — they lost five yards and a timeout before they snapped the ball — but bounced back to

pile up 300 yards of offense. They scored the first two offensive touchdowns surrendered by the Spartan defense in 2012.

After Notre Dame and Michigan State exchanged punts on their first drives, the Irish struck first when sophomore quarterback Everett Golson found graduate student receiver John Goodman for a 36-yard touchdown.

Golson evaded pressure in the backfield and rolled out to the right before lofting a cross-field pass to Goodman, who hauled in the throw despite a pass interference call on Michigan State junior cornerback Johnny Adams.

"That's who I was looking for. It wasn't really designed in the play," Golson said. "I think that's one of the things I talked about previously about improvising. I think me and Goodman kind of connected a little bit and we scored a touchdown."

Golson finished the game 14-for-32 for 178 yards with one touchdown and no interceptions. He also rushed for a touchdown for the second straight game when he snuck inside the front pylon for a seven-yard run in the second quarter. The score gave Notre Dame a 14-0 lead.

"I don't have to win the football game every play," Golson said. "We believe we're going to make enough plays so we just have to keep the course. My main focus

was to clean up my mistakes and really just manage the game."

A week after rushing for just 52 yards in a 20-17 win over Purdue, the Irish ground game racked up 122 yards on 34 attempts.

Senior running back Cierre Wood returned to the lineup after a two-game suspension held him out of games against Navy and Purdue. Wood rushed for 56 yards on 10 carries, highlighted by a 26-yard scamper in the fourth quarter that helped put the game away.

Notre Dame faced a second-and-one from its own nine-yard line when Wood received the handoff, ran left and cut back against the grain before being pushed out of bounds. Wood also converted on fourth down later in the drive.

"I thought we had a good play. I thought we had a play that

matched what [Michigan State] was doing [defensively]," Kelly said. "Generally, if I feel like we've got a good play call against it, I want to try to win the game there."

The Irish marched 84 yards in 12 plays, taking 6:35 off the clock on a drive that culminated with sophomore kicker Kyle Brindza's 29-yard field goal. Notre Dame controlled the ball for nearly 11 minutes in the fourth quarter.

"Right before the drive started, we told the line, just give us a couple seconds and that's exactly what they did," Wood said. "We started from our own four[-yard line], drove it all the way down and got some points out of it. That's what good teams do and that's what we did."

Senior running back Theo Riddick had 12 carries for 30 yards while sophomore running back George Atkinson had 43 yards on five attempts. Senior receiver Robby Toma led the Irish with five catches for 58 yards.

"We just wanted to come out and make a statement. Michigan State was a great team and we thought this could be a great platform to show the nation what we could do," Toma said.

Toma went to the same high school as Te'o and has known him since the pair was young.

"Growing up, football has always been our outlet. Manti is comfortable in this type of atmosphere and it showed tonight," Toma said. "Earlier in the week, he told me he needed me."

"He's a really strong guy, spiritually, mentally, physically. I was there to be his backbone."

The Irish return home next weekend for another rivalry game, this one against Michigan (2-1).

Notre Dame and the Wolverines will face off Saturday at 7:30 p.m. in Notre Dame Stadium.

Contact Matthew DeFranks at mdefrank@nd.edu

PLAYER OF THE GAME

MANTI TE'O NOTRE DAME LINEBACKER

Te'o survived one of the toughest weeks of his life and turned in one of the best performances of his career against the Spartans. The senior All-American piled up 12 tackles, two pass breakups, a tackle for loss and a fumble recovery. Te'o spearheaded the Irish defense that allowed just three points and 237 total yards.

REPORT CARD

B+

QUARTERBACKS

Everett Golson's stats may not be the most impressive, but the sophomore signal-caller ran when he needed to, threw the ball away when he had to and had zero turnovers. He managed the game well in his first true road start.

B

RUNNING BACKS

Theo Riddick struggled much of the game but Cierre Wood had a good game in his return from suspension. His 26-yard run and fourth-down conversion in the fourth quarter were crucial in sealing the win.

B-

RECEIVERS

Robby Toma stepped up time after time for Notre Dame, providing a spark the Irish were missing early on. Tyler Eifert and DaVaris Daniels were both held without a catch and the receivers couldn't get free on third down. Notre Dame finished 1-for-14 on third downs.

A

OFFENSIVE LINE

A week after Purdue pushed them around, the offensive line responded by controlling the line of scrimmage and opening up holes on the game-clinching drive. The unit also only allowed one sack after giving up five last week.

A

DEFENSIVE LINE

The depth of the Irish shined through Saturday, when three different players registered sacks — Sheldon Day, Stephon Tuitt and Tony Springmann. Notre Dame also held Le'Veon Bell to just 77 yards and only 13 in the second half.

A-

LINEBACKERS

Although the Spartans were able to dink and dunk the Irish early in the second half, Manti Te'o and company dominated the rest of the game. Danny Spond also made four tackles in his first start. The linebackers were also key in keeping Michigan State out of the red zone.

A-

DEFENSIVE BACKS

The Irish secondary allowed just two pass plays of over 20 yards despite losing Jamoris Slaughter to a season-ending injury. Matthias Farley and Elijah Shumate filled in nicely and helped limit Michigan State to 5-for-17 on third downs.

A

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kyle Brindza nailed both of his field goals and had forced four touchbacks on kickoffs. Ben Turk was instrumental in the field position battle as he pinned the Spartans inside the 20-yard four times.

A

COACHING

Bob Diaco had a masterful game plan on the defensive side of the ball, forcing eight Spartan punts. Chuck Martin, meanwhile, was able to call a balanced game.

OVERALL GPA: 3.59

Notre Dame punctuated its first big win in the Kelly era with a suffocating defensive performance, notching its first 3-0 start since 2002. Depth in the secondary will be tested following Slaughter's injury, but if the front seven can continue to put pressure on the quarterback, it will not matter as much.

PLAY OF THE GAME

GOLSON CONNECTS WITH GOODMAN ON TOUCHDOWN

Faced with a second-and-nine from the Spartan 36-yard line, Golson dropped back, avoided pressure before rolling to his right and chucking a diagonal pass to Goodman in the end zone. Goodman fought off a pass interference call to make the one-handed grab.



KEVIN SONG | The Observer

Senior linebacker Manti Te'o points to the sky after recovering a fumble in Notre Dame's 20-3 win over Michigan State on Saturday. The Irish supported Te'o after his grandmother and girlfriend died last week.

This Irish squad plays like more than a team



Andrew Gastelum
Associate Sports Editor

Ohana. It means family.

This Notre Dame football team is a family. Brian Kelly said it. Cierre Wood said it. John Goodman said it. Prince Shembo said it. Louis Nix said it. Robby Toma said it.

But Manti Te'o felt it.

The same man whose broad shoulders have carried this team for years was lifted Saturday by his teammates, his family. In Te'o, they found genuine inspiration. In his teammates, Te'o found unwavering support.

Just days after he lost both his grandmother and girlfriend, there was Te'o in East Lansing, Mich., doing the thing he knew best while showing the utmost mental fortitude — and leadership that goes far beyond the "C" on his jersey.

But it was his family on the field that made everything come together.

How else do the Irish not give up a touchdown to a team that had won its last 15 home games? How else do the Irish beat a top-10 team for the first time in its last 10 tries? How else do the Irish start 3-0 for the first time since 2002?

Families sacrifice, and that was the only way the Irish could win against a top-10 team.

Tyler Eifert sacrificed, returning from a mild concussion sustained against

Purdue to play tough minutes and not even show up on the stat sheet. The future first-round pick totaled zero catches, yet came up huge when it came to run blocking and providing maximum protection for Everett Golson against William Gholston and the ferocious Spartan defense.

The running game sacrificed, including Cierre Wood in his first game since returning from suspension. After 293 rushing yards against Navy in the season opener, the rushing attack has taken a backseat to the aerial attack so that Golson can come into his own as a quarterback and the offense can become more balanced.

The offensive line gave up one sack and paved the way for 122 rushing yards while receiving none of the credit a week after being eaten alive by Purdue's front seven.

Families come together when they are needed most, and that was the only way the Irish could win against a top-10 team.

Veteran receivers stepped up, as Toma led the receivers with five receptions and 58 yards while Goodman came down with a spectacular one-handed, 36-yard touchdown grab.

Ben Turk and the special teams unit consistently pinned the Spartans deep in their own half with an average field position on the Michigan State 20-yard line. But the biggest show of

unity was when Te'o took the field, backed by his defensive family and playing the most inspired football of his distinguished career. The same secondary that was seen as a defensive liability consistently broke up passes, holding Michigan State quarterback Andrew Maxwell to 4-for-15 passing in the fourth quarter.

That same unit — led by Te'o's 12 tackles — held Heisman candidate Le'Veon Bell to 77 yards, compared to Bell's 140 yards-per-game average. Bell didn't even get a carry in the fourth quarter and the Spartans never set foot in the red zone. Never.

When the Irish held a late lead, the family stepped up and kept grinding. Michigan State crossed midfield just once, before immediately being pushed back by a holding penalty.

When injuries forced the next man in, the family didn't miss a step. In fact, they became closer, enthused by their sacrifice and unity. Brian Kelly's next-man-in philosophy assumes family, but on Saturday the Irish put it on full display and that's the something.

"At the end of the day, families are forever," Te'o said.

Without a doubt, this ohana is.

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The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Observer.

Shembo, defense shut down Michigan State attack



Junior linebacker Prince Shembo, 55, fights off a block during Notre Dame's 20-3 win over Michigan State on Saturday. Shembo had a career-high nine tackles and a sack in the victory.

By **ANDREW GASTELUM**
Associate Sports Editor

In last season's 31-13 win over Michigan State, junior linebacker Prince Shembo was notably absent after leaving the team to attend to family matters.

But he made sure No. 10 Michigan State felt his presence this time around, recording nine tackles, two tackles for a loss, two quarterback hurries, one sack and a trademark sack dance in No. 20 Notre Dame's 20-3 win.

"Every day we are just going to have to come out and prove," he said. "We are not going to do [anything] different. It doesn't mean anything [extra], it's just another win in the books. So now we just have to get prepared for the next game and do what we've been doing."

"[Defensively] the team's identity is the whole defense [being] there for each other and improving every day. So we just have to keep pumping each other up and we'll be good."

The Charlotte, N.C., native recorded a career-high in tackles — in just the first half alone with eight. Coming into the game Shembo had six tackles on the season, but the linebacker excelled in extended playing time, especially on third downs as the Irish forced eight punts.

"[Third down] is pretty much pin your ears back and go," Shembo said. "It was about stopping the run and forcing the pass."

"I just did what I could do to help the team. [Michigan State] just kept running at me."

Shembo, along with senior linebacker Manti Te'o and his team-leading 12 tackles, shut down Michigan State's Heisman candidate in junior running Le'Veon Bell. Bell entered the game averaging 140 yards per game and two touchdowns, including a 210-yard, 44-carry performance in a 17-13 season-opening win over No. 24 Boise State on Aug. 31.

Saturday, Bell rushed for 77 yards — his longest run coming in at 15 yards.

"Their weapon was No. 24 [Bell]," Te'o said. "If we can stop their weapon, they're going to have to do something that they are not comfortable doing. And so [we knew] if we could stop what they like to do, that will be our best bet and our guys did a good job in focusing and coming to play."

Shembo had a slightly more simplified reason for stopping Bell.

"He's a big guy, I'm a bigger guy," Shembo said.

In their last two meetings, the Irish defense has held the daunting Michigan State rushing attack to 79 total rushing yards. In the second half Saturday, the Spartans

actually lost 24 rushing yards, mostly because they abandoned the running game while playing from behind.

"We had a gameplan going in. The whole thing was just everybody getting to the ball," Te'o said. "Everybody having that tenacity and working together and doing their job. It was just about having that edge about them."

Shembo wasn't the only fresh face lining up against the Spartans, as the Irish received major contributions from a young secondary and a flurry of freshman.

"I think the young guys came out and did a lot of things," junior defensive tackle Louis Nix said. "[Freshman safety] Elijah Shumate broke up two passes on third-and-long that could have been first downs. [Freshman defensive end] Sheldon Day came up with a big sack. [Sophomore defensive tackle] Tony Springmann came up with a big sack. I think the young guys came out and did a very good job for us."

Meanwhile, Shembo attributed the defense's standout performance to the unit's togetherness under a familiar mantra.

"We've talked about starting well and finishing well," Shembo said. "The three F's: faith, focus and finish."

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Points allowed fewest since '88

By **MATTHEW DeFRANKS**
Associate Sports Editor

The Notre Dame defense has allowed just 30 total points through its first three games, the fewest since the 1988 squad allowed 27 points to open the season. The 1988 team won Notre Dame's last national championship.

"The most important thing is that our defense continues to be the group that we had committed to in building when we started this process, and they're starting to get to

that level that can play against anybody," Irish coach Brian Kelly said.

The three points allowed were the fewest surrendered by an Irish defense against a top-10 opponent on the road since 1966, when they shut out USC.

Eifert held catchless

Senior tight end Tyler Eifert was held without a catch for the first time since Sept. 25, 2010, against Stanford. Eifert had at least one reception in the 22 games he played in since.

"What we've asked [Eifert] to do is block in our offense when we need it," Kelly said. "He's always a guy that will do whatever we ask him to do. The kind of game we got into required him as a tight end to get in there a grind it out."

Eifert led all Football Bowl Subdivision tight ends in receptions and yards last season and is second in Notre Dame history for receiving yards by a tight end.

Contact Matthew DeFranks at mdefrank@nd.edu

SCORING SUMMARY

	1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	TOTAL
	7	7	0	6	20
	0	3	0	0	3

1 NOTRE DAME 7, MICHIGAN STATE 0
John Goodman 36-yard pass from Everett Golson (Brindza kick)
🕒 **10:34** remaining
Drive: 4 plays, 51 yards, 1:11 elapsed

2 NOTRE DAME 14, MICHIGAN STATE 0
Everett Golson six-yard run (Brindza kick)
🕒 **10:50** remaining
Drive: 5 plays, 51 yards, 2:45 elapsed

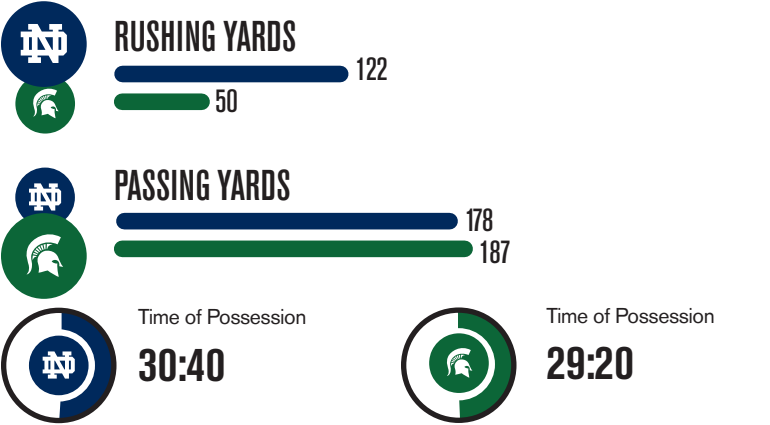
NOTRE DAME 14, MICHIGAN STATE 3
Day Conroy 50-yard field goal
🕒 **3:43** remaining
Drive: 13 plays, 43 yards, 7:07 elapsed

3 NO SCORING DRIVES

4 NOTRE DAME 17, MICHIGAN STATE 3
Kyle Brindza 29-yard field goal
🕒 **6:21** remaining
Drive: 12 plays, 84 yards, 6:35 elapsed

NOTRE DAME 20, MICHIGAN STATE 3
Kyle Brindza 47-yard field goal
🕒 **3:18** remaining
Drive: 4 plays, 3 yards, 1:02 elapsed

STATISTICS



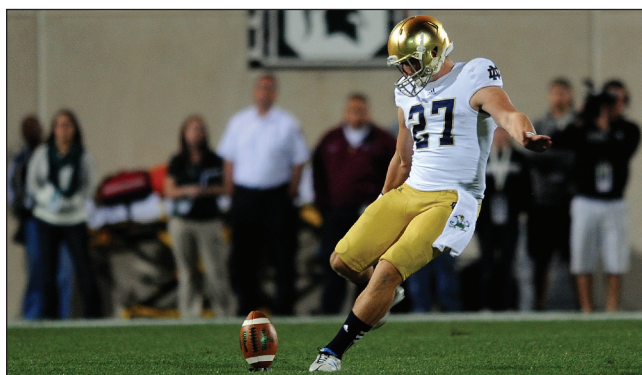


MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Senior linebacker Manti Te'o defends a pass intended for Spartans junior tight end Dion Sims. After a week of personal tragedy, Te'o led the Irish defense in stopping the Michigan State offense, recording 12 tackles and an interception. He will next lead the Notre Dame defense against Michigan quarterback Denard Robinson.

STOPPING THE SPARTANS

The Irish used their dominating defense and timely rushing attack to leave their first true road test with a 20-3 win over Michigan State. Notre Dame limited the Spartans to only 237 total yards and yielded just a 50-yard field goal. The Irish are 3-0 for the first time in 10 years and the win was the first over a top-10 opponent since 2005, when Notre Dame topped then-No. 5 Michigan.



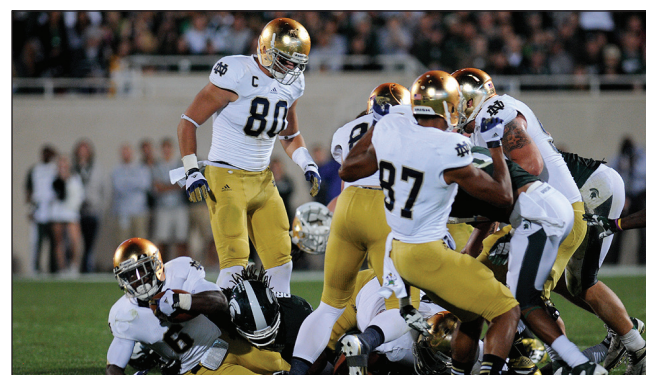
KEVIN SONG | The Observer

Sophomore kicker Kyle Brindza winds up to kick off. Brindza recorded four touchbacks on kickoffs.



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Senior running back Cierre Wood searches for running room. Wood had 56 rushing yards on 10 carries.



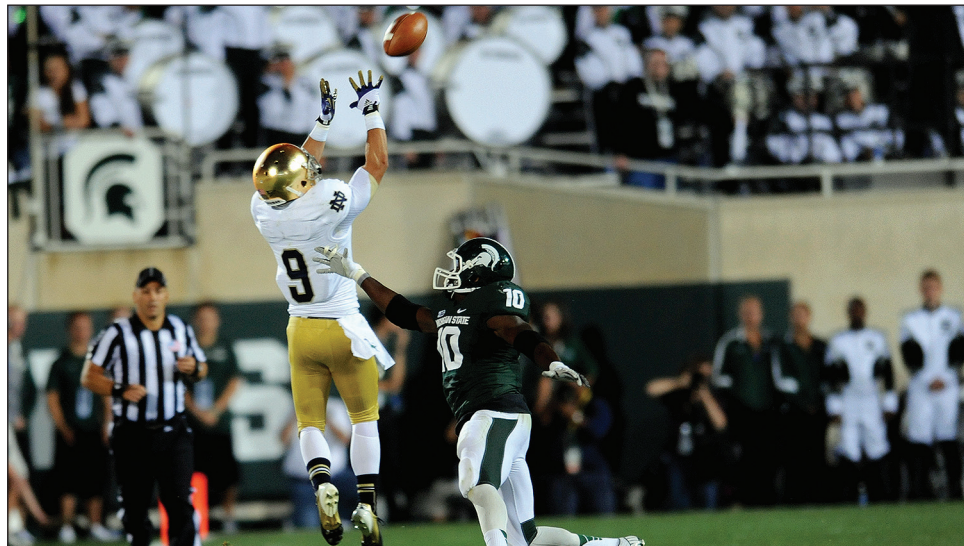
MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Senior running back Theo Riddick, left, is tackled by a crowd of Michigan State defenders.



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Sophomore defensive end Stephon Tuitt engages with Spartans sophomore offensive tackle Skyler Burkland. Tuitt had a sack in the game, upping his season total to five.



KEVIN SONG | The Observer

Senior receiver Robby Toma leaps to snare a pass from sophomore quarterback Everett Golson. The pair connected on five passes for 58 yards.